Species Champions of Rhode Island’s Forest Canopy

Rhode Island’s canopy provides a delightful array of trees. A tally of the biggest trees of their kind began on index cards, and is now in cyber space. The greatest trees in Rhode Island continue to astound and delight. Recognizing the premiere trees is an interesting challenge that helps us to keep in tune with the changing landscape. We find Champion trees in yards, parks and forests.

The particular siting of the tree is important, as is the origin of the species. Let us consider the array of Champion trees, and their origins. The list below features trees native in Rhode Island, and trees native to North America. The remaining list is of trees introduced from other continents. On plains, mountains and coast, forests fluctuate in composition, molded by glacial forces and changes in climate. Rhode Island is an unusual geographic region (Appalachian/Coastal), where the last leading glacier edge was found. Tree species are always on the move. Our general context of time is the forest development since the last glaciation 11,000 years ago. So suffice it to say, any trees persisting today are remarkable, and the champions of those, really are amazing. As of 2018, there were 141 crowned species.

**NATIVE in RHODE ISLAND**
- pignut hickory
- northern red oak
- black oak
- post oak
- pitch pine
- eastern white pine
- American plum
- quaking poplar
- sassafras
- black spruce
- American sycamore
- Tulip tree
- Tupelo
- butternut, white walnut

**NATIVE in NORTH AMERICA**
- white ash
- post oak
- American beech
- black oak
- yellow birch
- pitch pine
- cherry birch, black birch
- eastern white pine
- gray birch
- American linden, basswood
- Arborvitae, Western
- sassafras
- Atlantic white cedar
- black spruce
- eastern red cedar
- American sycamore
- choke cherry
- Tulip tree
- pin cherry
- Tupelo
- black cherry
- flowering big-bracted-dogwood
- black oak
- pagoda dogwood
- scarlett oak
- flowering big-bracted-dogwood
- swamp white oak
- eastern cottonwood,
- silver maple
- dogwood, big-bracted-dogwood
- common hackberry
- eastern white oak
- cockspur hawthorn
- mountain maple
- silver maple
- northern red oak
- dogwood, big-bracted-dogwood
- post oak
- black oak
- pignut hickory
- pitch pine
- flowering big-bracted-dogwood
- dogwood, Cornelian Cherry
- dogwood, Eastern
- sassafras
- Ash, White
- dogwood, Cornelian Cherry
- Ash, Black
- Dogwood, Eastern
- Mockernut, White
- Dogwood, Cornelian Cherry
- Orange, Osage
- Ash, Green
- Elm, American
- Redbud, Eastern
- Apple, Greening
- Fir, Silver
- Sourwood
- Arborvitae, Western
- Fir, White
- Silverbell, Mountain
- Birch, Sweet
- Hemlock, Eastern
- Silverbell, Carolina
- Birch, Paper
- Hickory, Sweet
- Sweet Gum
- Buckeye, Yellow
- Honeylocust, Common
- Tupelo
- Catalpa, Northern
- Larch, Eastern
- Yellowwood
- Incense cedar, California
- Locust, Black
- Walnut, Black
- Chestnut, Zimmerman
- Magnolia, Cucumber tree
- Maple, Ash leaf
- Coffee Tree, Kentucky
- Magnolia, Kobus
- Maple, Black
- Chestnut, American
- Magnolia, Saucer
- Sassafras
- Crabapple, Common
- Mountain maple

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**Trees Introduced to Rhode Island**

Birds, collectors, cargo, and industries, are the largest reasons for the translocation of trees. Whether intentional, or inadvertently, new varieties and species have been introduced. These trees come from similar latitudes and climes. However, an introduced tree leaves a lot of its associates behind, so a trees introduction to an area can have various consequences. When an introduced species overtakes and inhibits local flora, this is considered ‘invasive’.  

Understanding how to recognize the trees, appropriate for long term canopy investment, helps assure that efforts today result in canopy benefits for decades. Evaluating the introduced champions may help to identify canopy contributors that are hearty, capable and beneficial. While promoting natives is an effective way forward, considerations regarding introduced species ought be done with deliberate inquiry of landscape impact.

**Enjoy the Cornucopia!!**

**EUROPE/SCANDINAVIA**
- Spruce, Norway
- Spruce, Yeddo
- Pine, Lacebark
- Pine, Swiss Stone
- Pine, Scotch
- Planetree, London
- Maple, Norway
- Horse chestnut, Europe
- Elm, Camperdown
- Beech, European
- Maple, Sycamore
- Oak, English

**AFRICA/MIDDLE EAST**
- Cedar, Atlas
- Fir, Nordmann
- Cedar of Lebanon

**EAST ASIA/JAPAN**
- Maidenhair tree
- Cork tree, Amur
- Cherry, Higan

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<tr>
<th>Horseshoe chestnut, Red</th>
<th>Elm, Wych</th>
<th>Ailanthus, Tree of Heaven</th>
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<tr>
<td>Linden, Littleleaf</td>
<td>Elm, Siberian</td>
<td>Scholar tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linden, Silver</td>
<td>Viburnum, Siebold</td>
<td>Katsura tree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Larch, European</td>
<td>Silk tree, Mimosa</td>
<td>Snowbell, Japanese</td>
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**References**

1. Vascular Flora of Rhode Island—A list of Native and Naturalized Plants; Rhode Island Natural History Survey, 1998
2. RI Native Plant Guide–URI Cooperative Extension

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